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Bishop Jim's followers thrive in jungle commune

GEORGETOWN, Guyana (UPI) — About 100 followers of a self-styled San Francisco bishop started a multiracial agricultural commune three years ago in the jungles of this South American nation and according to all reports, they are surviving and prospering.

At Port Kaituma in Guyana's North West District at the western end of the country about 100 persons — all U.S. citizens — have carved an agricultural project from hundreds of acres of land formerly occupied by forest.

The architect of the project is Bishop Jim Jones of the People's Temple of San Francisco who visited the project recently to observe its progress and expressed satisfaction. The People's Temple was given land on lease by the Guyana government, which has given every cooperation.

The project was started about three years ago and now the settlers of all races are living in 41 completed homes constructed mostly by themselves. There is a plan to build another 100 houses during the next year.

Jones said his objective in Guyana is to join the government in helping to develop the country. He said he has invested over $1 million in the project. Vegetable and fruit production has been abundant with trees and plants flourishing in what was once virgin land. The farm supplies food for the workers, who are now self-sufficient, the community of Port Kaituma and Matthew's Ridge while the surplus is sent to the capital, Georgetown.

The Port Kaituma Commune has produced a new "outlaw" bean, which tastes like pork sausage. Their animal and poultry farm includes about 300 pigs and over 200 chickens. A large shallow water well with a capacity of 16,000 gallons supplements three smaller wells.

The problem of insect and pest control is also being tackled successfully. An underground cellar 15 by 120 feet has been dug for temperature control. In it grains are stored and beans and peas until the next harvest. Another innovation is the use of sea shells as fertilizers.

The Port Kaituma commune residents are 150 learning such skills as carpentry, electrical engineering, plumbing and printing. Adequate medical facilities are provided, but there is a plan to build a small hospital with modern facilities and an experienced staff to cater not only to settlers but the nearby communities.

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